

## 6 Steps to an Oral Cancer Exam

Your dental or medical provider will:

1. Ask you to remove your dentures if you wear them.
2. Check and feel your face, neck, ears and lip to look for any lumps. Feel under your chin and on both sides of your neck.
3. Look and feel the inside of your lips and cheeks for red or white spots.
4. Ask you to stick out your tongue and look for red or white spots on your tongue with a piece of gauze to see the sides and under your tongue.
5. Check the roof of your mouth, the back of your throat and the floor of your mouth.



6. Put a finger under your tongue and the other finger under your chin and press down to check for lumps.

If you would like to know more about oral cancer, contact the:

### Office of Oral Health

Maryland Department of Health  
and Mental Hygiene  
201 West Preston Street, 3rd Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410-767-5300

[dhmh.oralhealth@maryland.gov](mailto:dhmh.oralhealth@maryland.gov)  
<http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth>



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# Oral Cancer



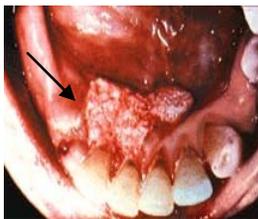
**Martin O'Malley, Governor**  
**Anthony G. Brown, Lieutenant Governor**  
**Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary**

**Maryland Department of  
Health and Mental Hygiene**

# About Oral Cancer

**Oral cancer** is a type of cancer that occurs anywhere in the mouth and on the lips.

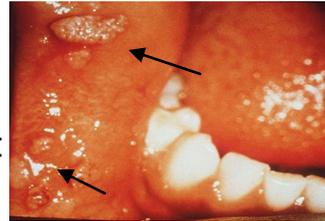
- ◆ Approximately 40,000 new cases of oral cancer are expected in the United States each year.
- ◆ In Maryland, an average of 600 new cases are expected each year.
- ◆ The risk factors of oral cancer include:
  - ◆ Age. Most oral cancers occur after age 40.
  - ◆ Gender. Oral cancer is twice as common in men as in women.
  - ◆ Tobacco use.
  - ◆ Alcohol use.
  - ◆ Diet.
  - ◆ Prolonged sun exposure.
  - ◆ Human Papillomavirus (HPV).
- ◆ **MOST** oral cancer is preventable. **Early detection is important!**



## Signs and Symptoms

It is important to consult with a dental or medical provider if any of these conditions last more than **two weeks**.

- A sore on your lip or in your mouth that does not heal. This is the most common symptom.
- Patches inside your mouth or on your lips that are white, a mixture of red and white, or red.
- A sore throat or feeling that something is caught in the throat.
- Numbness on the tongue or other area of the mouth.
- Difficulty moving the jaw or tongue.
- Difficulty wearing dentures.
- Difficulty swallowing or chewing.
- Loosening of the teeth or pain around the teeth or jaw.



## Prevention

There is a better chance for a cure if oral cancer is found early.

- ✓ **Have an oral exam once a year.**  
Ask your dental or medical provider for an oral cancer exam during your visit.
- ✓ **Avoid tobacco products — cigarettes, chew or snuff, pipes or cigars.**  
90% of patients with oral cancer use tobacco.
- ✓ **Limit alcohol consumption.**  
80% of patients with oral cancer frequently consume alcohol.
- ✓ **Use a lip balm with a SPF of at least 15.**  
30% of patients with oral cancer have outdoor occupations associated with prolonged sun exposure.
- ✓ **Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables.**  
Eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day may provide some protection against oral cancer.

### Free Help for Quitting Tobacco Use

The Maryland Tobacco Quitline is a free service provided by DHMH to help people quit using tobacco products. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for free telephone-based counseling, support and tips to help you quit for good or visit [www.quitnow.net/maryland](http://www.quitnow.net/maryland).